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CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Original) A medical article that comprises an antimicrobial region, said antimicrobial region comprising release-modulating microparticles dispersed within a latex polymer, said release-modulating microparticles comprising an antimicrobial agent and being adapted to release the antimicrobial agent.

2. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said medical article is selected from gloves, finger cots, supply and drainage tubes, catheters, condoms and contraceptive diaphragms.

3. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said medical article is a balloon catheter.

4. (Original) The medical article of claim 3, wherein said antimicrobial region is a balloon sleeve.

5. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said antimicrobial region is heat cured.

6. (Currently amended) A medical article that comprises an antimicrobial region, said antimicrobial region comprising release-modulating microparticles dispersed within a latex polymer, said release-modulating microparticles comprising an antimicrobial agent and being adapted to release the antimicrobial agent. ~~The medical article of claim 5,~~ wherein said antimicrobial region is vulcanized.

7. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles comprise an encapsulating region that surrounds a region comprising said antimicrobial agent.

8. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles comprise a core and an encapsulating layer surrounding said core, wherein said core comprises said antimicrobial agent, and wherein said encapsulating layer comprises a polymer.

9. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles comprise a polymer, and wherein said antimicrobial compound is dispersed within said polymer.

10. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles comprise an inorganic material, and wherein said antimicrobial compound is dispersed within said inorganic material.

11. (Original) The medical article of claim 10, wherein said antimicrobial compound is dispersed within pores of said inorganic material.

12. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles comprise a silver-containing ion exchange material.

13. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said microparticles are silver-containing zeolite particles.

14. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said antimicrobial agent comprises silver.

15. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said latex polymer is formed from a natural latex.

16. (Original) The medical article of claim 1, wherein said latex polymer is formed from a synthetic latex.

17. (Original) The medical article of claim 16, wherein said synthetic latex is a pseudolatex.

18 (Previously presented). The medical article of claim 1, wherein said release-modulating microparticles have an average largest dimension, on a weight average basis, ranging from 0.1 to 100 microns.

19. (Original) A process for providing the antimicrobial region of claim 1, comprising: (a) providing a latex comprising said microparticles, (b) contacting said latex with a substrate, and (c) curing said latex thereby forming said antimicrobial region.

20. (Original) The process of claim 19, wherein said substrate is a mold that is dipped into said latex.

21. (Previously presented) A medical article that comprises an antimicrobial region, said antimicrobial region comprising release-modulating microparticles dispersed within a latex polymer, said release-modulating microparticles comprising an antimicrobial agent and being adapted to release the antimicrobial agent, and said release-modulating microparticles selected from the group consisting of microparticles that comprise an encapsulating region that surrounds a region comprising an antimicrobial agent and microparticles that comprise a polymer having an antimicrobial agent dispersed within said polymer.

22. (New) The medical article of claim 21, wherein said antimicrobial region is vulcanized.